DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 434 508 FL 025 965

AUTHOR Helmar-Salasoo, Ester; Kahr, Sally

TITLE Collegial Support and Networks Invigorate Teaching: The Case of Marsha S. Slater. CELA Research Report. Case Study Number 12008.

INSTITUTION National Research Center on English Learning and Achievement, Albany, NY.

SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.

PUB DATE 1999-00-00

NOTE 59p.

CONTRACT R305A60005

PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Case Studies; Educational Strategies; *English (Second Language); High Schools; Instructional Effectiveness; *Literacy Education; *Networks; *Peer Relationship; Profiles; Second Language Instruction; Secondary School Teachers; Teacher Characteristics; *Teaching Skills; Teaching Styles

ABSTRACT

The report profiles the work of Marsha S. Slater, who teaches at the International High School in New York (New York), a highly successful school devoted exclusively to enabling English-as-a-Second-Language students to develop the linguistic, cognitive, and cultural skills necessary for success in and beyond high school. The report describes the professional environments in which she works and has participated throughout her teaching career, and the specific ways she helps her students become highly literate language users. Focus is on the connections between professional influences, teaching approaches, and student achievement. The first section describes the structure, philosophy, and teaching methods of the International High School program. The second section reviews Marsha Slater's professional experience and team approach. Part three explores how English is experienced in her classroom through student groups, student talk, writing, reading, thinking, and assessment. The fourth part discusses significant elements in her classroom and the links between her professional life and classroom practice. Some instructional materials are appended. Contains 9 references. (MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 434 508

CELA RESEARCH REPORT

COLLEGIAL SUPPORT AND NETWORKS INVIGORATE TEACHING: THE CASE OF MARSHA S. SLATER

ESTER HELMAR-SALASOO
WITH
SALLY KAHR

CASE STUDY NUMBER 12008

NATIONAL RESEARCH CENTER ON

ENGLISH LEARNING & ACHIEVEMENT

THE UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY ■ THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA ■ THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

National Research Ctr. On Eng. Learning Achievement

1

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

FL025965

COLLEGIAL SUPPORT AND NETWORKS INVIGORATE TEACHING: THE CASE OF MARSHA S. SLATER

ESTER HELMAR-SALASOO
WITH
SALLY KAHR

The National Research Center on English Learning & Achievement
The University at Albany
State University of New York
1400 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12222

Report Series 12008
http://cela.albany.edu/slater/pubindex.html/
1999

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my appreciation to Marsha S. Slater for opening her classroom to me for the year and for sharing her wisdom.

Thanks also to Miles Myers and Paula Preller whose comments and thoughtful editing, respectively, contributed to the final report, and to Sally Kahr for research and writing conducted during year 1 of the project.

Finally, deepest thanks to Aime Kiibits who willingly opened her home to me for the year 1997-1998.

E H-S

National Research Center on English Learning & Achievement
University at Albany, School of Education, B-9
1400 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12222
http://cela.albany.edu
518-442-5026

The Center on English Learning & Achievement (CELA) is a national research and development center located at the University at Albany, State University of New York, in collaboration with the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Additional research is conducted at the Universities of Georgia and Washington.

The Center, established in 1987, initially focused on the teaching and learning of literature. In March 1996, the Center expanded its focus to include the teaching and learning of English, both as a subject in its own right and as it is learned in other content areas. CELA's work is sponsored by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), U.S. Department of Education, as part of OERI's National Institute on Student Achievement, Curriculum, and Assessment.

This report is based on research supported in part under the Research and Development Centers Program (award number R305A60005) as administered by OERI, and partly under the auspices of the National Institute on Post-Secondary Education, Libraries, and Lifelong Learning. However, the contents do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the Department of Education, OERI, or either Institute.

9907-12008

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1

PART 1: INTERNATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL 3
- Program Structure 4
- Educational Philosophy 5
- Interdisciplinary Study 5
- Collaborative Learning 6
- Peer Support and Peer Evaluation Teams 7
- Schoolwide Evaluation 8
- Graduation Requirements 9
- Learning a Language 9
- Evidence of Success at International High School 10
- Special Programs 11
- Wide Professional Networks 13

PART 2: MARSHA S. SLATER'S PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE 14
- The Role Reflection and Evaluation Play in Slater's Professional Experience 15
- Slater's Work on Her Team 18

PART 3: HOW ENGLISH IS EXPERIENCED IN SLATER'S CLASSROOM 19
- Student Groups 21
- Student Talk 25
- Writing 30
- Reading 33
- Thinking 35
- Assessment 36

PART 4: DISCUSSION 37
- Three Significant Elements of Slater's English Classroom 37
- Links Between Slater's Professional Life and Her Classroom Practice 39

REFERENCES 41

APPENDICES A - D ..... 43 - 52

RELATED REPORTS AND CASE STUDIES 53

EVALUATION FORM 55

FOREWORD

The school door you will open as you read this case study reveals a very special place. Here students are actively involved in becoming highly literate; they are learning how language works in context and how to use it to advantage for specific purposes. Here, too, teachers are supported in their efforts to improve their teaching and to grow as professionals.

What makes this kind of environment possible? A team of field researchers and I have been exploring this question in a major five-year project for the National Research Center on English Learning & Achievement (CELA). This case study is one part of that project, which involves 15 other English programs nationwide. Each is providing English instruction to middle and high school students. Most are exemplary; some are more typical and give us points of contrast. Overall our study examines the contexts that lead to thought-provoking learning in English classes and the professional contexts that support such learning. This case report offers a portrait of one teacher within the contexts of both her school and her profession. We offer it to provide food for thought and a model for action for readers or groups of readers who wish to improve the English language arts learning of their own students.

The programs we are studying represent great diversity in student populations, educational problems, and approaches to improvement. The reports and case studies that comprise this project (listed on p. 53) don't compare programs with one another; nor do they characterize programs as process-oriented, traditional, or interdisciplinary. Instead, they provide a conception of what "English" is as it is enacted in the classrooms of our best teachers, how these teachers have reconciled the various voices and trends within the professional community in their own practices, how their schools and districts support and encourage their efforts, and how in turn the contexts they create in their classrooms shape the high literacy learning of their students. The results have implications for curriculum, instruction, and assessment, as well as policy decisions, in English and the language arts.

For my first cross-cutting report, *Excellence in English in Middle and High School: How Teachers' Professional Lives Support Student Achievement* (CELA Report #12002), I analyzed the data across all case studies for overarching patterns. In it, I identify and discuss particular features of teachers' professional experiences that permeate these special programs.

I am profoundly grateful for the cooperation and vision of the teachers and administrators who contributed their time and ideas so generously and so graciously to this project. It was indeed a privilege for the field researchers and me to enter into their worlds of learning — a place I now invite you to visit and learn from in the following pages.

Judith A. Langer
Director, CELA
March 1999

COLLEGIAL SUPPORT AND NETWORKS INVIGORATE TEACHING: THE CASE OF MARSHA S. SLATER

ESTER HELMAR-SALASOO
WITH
SALLY KAHR

This case study focuses on an exemplary teacher, Marsha S. Slater, who teaches at International High School, a highly successful school in New York City devoted exclusively to enabling English as a Second Language (ESL) students to develop the linguistic, cognitive, and cultural skills necessary for success in high school, college, and beyond. By describing the professional environments within which Slater works and has participated in throughout her teaching career as well as the specific ways she helps her students become highly literate language users, this paper illustrates the connectedness between professional influences, teacher approaches, and student achievement. This case study covers one part of a five-year, federally-funded study of exemplary English programs, which is directed by Judith A. Langer of the National Research Center on English Learning & Achievement (CELA).

INTRODUCTION

The well-known increase in the numbers of students of cultural and linguistic diversity has placed tremendous demands on schools and placed uncomfortable pedagogical demands on teachers. The persistently high failure rate of these students in U.S. schools is well documented in higher school drop-out rates and lower literacy levels. Inner city schools particularly enroll students who speak a language other than English; often, existing school programs offer no definitive solution.

The traditional ways of teaching ESL students usually don't include much reading, writing, talking, or thinking, because the belief is that ESL students must first perfect their English language skills, mostly through decontextualized short answer textbook questions and oral language drill-skills. Traditionally, too, the linguistic and cultural resources of students are excluded in order to focus on learning English language skills and American ways. ESL students are often isolated from native English students in separate classes where they work from ESL texts. Give or take a few cosmetic changes over the last years, this kind of practice is typical nationwide. Yet, we know that an environment where ESL students have little opportunity to

talk, read whole texts, think, and write at length results in minimal language development and minimal opportunity to develop high literacy.

This case study focuses on a school that takes quite a different approach. It describes the stunning success of a classroom in an ESL high school in New York City. International High School is an alternative high school for students who have lived in the United States less than four years and have scored less than the 21st percentile on the English Language Assessment Battery Test. In 1997-98 International enrolled 451 students from 48 countries with students speaking 37 languages. The school is extraordinary in every aspect — from its democratic leadership, to its language-rich interdisciplinary academic programs, to its collegial and supportive environment, to its high graduation and college acceptance rates.

As part of the Center on English Learning & Achievement's "Excellence in English" study, we spent two years studying International and observing English teacher, Marsha S. Slater, collecting data on her professional experiences and contexts and on the way English is lived in her classroom. We sought to answer questions such as: What counts as "English"? What is the social context within which Slater organizes learning? What is the professional context within which she works and in what ways does this influence what happens in her classroom? How can we begin to explain the extraordinary success of International's ESL students when those in other high schools within the city are so likely to fail? What is it about International High School and the way that staff and students work within it that enables it to beat the odds?

To find answers to these questions, we observed Slater's classroom and interviewed her formally and informally, in person and over the phone. She shared ideas, videos, and writings she has shaped over the years. She also shared the professional development experiences that had a pivotal effect on her teaching and on the direction of learning in the school. In addition, we attended team meetings, other school meetings, and school retreats, and we interviewed the principal, assistant principal, guidance counselors, paraprofessionals, and other faculty members. During one year we positioned audio tape recorders in Slater's classroom on the four tables where students do their work, always in groups. We also selected six students in the class to participate individually in the study; we interviewed them and collected their work during the year: essays, journals, research papers, notes, letters, poems, and stories. We sat in on their student and parent conferences as well. Many hours were spent just mingling with students in the hallways, the

computer room, the library, and the cafeteria. One of us, Ester Helmar-Salasoo, lived in the community on and off during the 1997-98 academic year, enabling us to get a feel for where the students live.

Slater's classroom is a rich literacy community. The exemplary practices described below are similar to the kind of exemplary practices seen in mainstream classrooms of native English speakers. Teacher expectations are high, class work is academically rigorous, and students, who are treated as intelligent, learn to think and communicate as highly literate individuals. If Slater's classroom were filled with native English speakers, it would be viewed as excellent. But given the varied language background of Slater's students, what occurs in her classroom is a remarkable achievement because it shows how English learners can and do excel in developing not just literacy, but high literacy, if someone trusts them enough.

In order to give a full view of Marsha S. Slater, English teacher, this paper begins with a description of International High School, its philosophies, procedures, programs, and accomplishments. Part 2 describes Slater's professional experiences. In Part 3, a picture of how English is learned in Slater's classroom is given. Finally, Part 4 summarizes and discusses the key elements of Slater's approach to English instruction as well as the ways that her professional experiences influence this approach.

PART 1: INTERNATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

International High School is nestled near "America's most diverse neighborhood" (*USA Today*, October 13, 1997). This multicultural neighborhood serves as a stepping stone onto American soil. It welcomes newcomers with an array of familiar ethnic stores, restaurants, and faces. Most immigrants are likely to find somebody in these surrounds who has made the same long trek from their native countries.

The school is housed at LaGuardia Community College in a busy nonresidential area. It is near one of the major traffic bridges to Manhattan and has several noisy roads nearby. A major form of transportation to the school is train, and many students commute long distances to attend. The train snakes past the school on an elevated track, leaving an ugly metal scar in its wake. The

neighborhood is run-down and splashed with graffiti, but there are also a few newly painted and restored large buildings and warehouses. There are no residential homes around the school. Instead a correctional facility stands diagonally opposite the college, and a factory hides in the next block. The odd bagel and coffee cart sits out on the gum-plastered sidewalk feeding the constant stream of students.

LaGuardia Community College welcomes its students with a huge banner. Once inside, International students need to make their way past security guards, down hallways, past the college library to the basement where the high school is housed. The busy office, staffed by students, is the first stop at the high school. The nearby hallway is decked with displays — two bold notice-boards with information about the Chinese Club and about Ecuador. Other notice-boards proudly list the universities, public and private, to which last year's graduating class were accepted (including Columbia, MIT, Cornell, University of Chicago, and many others).

Program Structure

The school's instructional offerings are grouped into six thematically based interdisciplinary programs. Students are assigned to a cluster for the year. Within each cluster, students study humanities and math/science/technology with the group of teachers assigned to that cluster. Each cluster studies two themes (one for each semester), such as "Motion," "Visibility/Invisibility," and "American Dream." The school runs 70-minute periods six times a day from 8:00 am to 3:25 pm. Each teaching team is responsible for creating its own curriculum, scheduling classes, and determining assessment procedures. International High School relies primarily on portfolios for assessment. Students' portfolios, successful course completion, and receiving the minimum number of course credits form the bases of high school graduation. By the time students graduate, most will usually have made use of LaGuardia's facilities and courses. They will also have completed two required internships of about 13 weeks each (a minimum of four days a week) conducted either on campus or in the community.

Educational Philosophy

The community of the school has evolved through vigilant adherence and commitment to the school's mission statement, which outlines its goals and principles:

1. Limited English proficient students require the ability to understand, speak, read and write English with near-native fluency to realize their full potential within an English-speaking society.
2. In an increasingly interdependent world, fluency in a language other than English must not be viewed as a handicap, but rather as a resource for the student, the school, and the society.
3. Language skills are most effectively learned in context and emerge most naturally in purposeful, language-rich, interdisciplinary study.
4. The most successful educational programs are those which emphasize high expectations coupled with effective support systems.
5. Individuals learn best from each other in heterogeneous, collaborative groupings.
6. The carefully planned use of multiple learning contexts in addition to the classroom (e.g., learning centers, career internship sites, field trips), facilitates language acquisition and content area mastery.
7. Career education is a significant motivational factor for adolescent learners.
8. The most effective instruction takes place when teachers actively participate in the school decision making process, including instructional program design, curriculum development, and materials selection.

Interdisciplinary Study

In International's interdisciplinary approach, the curriculum of the entire school is linked thematically. Students are required to make connections among the disciplines. For example, one cluster of students studies the overarching theme of "Motion" over the whole first semester (about 20 weeks), and the more specific topic of "Forces" over a period of four weeks in all of the subject areas: humanities (language arts, social studies, and art) and math/science/technology. Teacher-created "activity guides," rather than textbooks or workbooks, form the curricular and instructional framework. Students respond to literature and together work through projects in small groups via these activity guides. (See Appendix B for a sample activity guide.) Students

not only develop a broad and deep repertoire of language skills, but also write a mastery essay in which they synthesize their knowledge and critical thinking skills within and across the content areas.

The teamwork necessary to create, revise, and teach these interdisciplinary programs requires teachers to model collaborative work to their students, who then engage in collaborative learning themselves. Teachers spend a great deal of time meeting and planning together. The six teams of teachers meet weekly to plan and discuss issues of curriculum, instruction, individual students or teachers, and other issues. These meeting times are built into their schedules. During the period of our study, Slater's Motion team met formally twice weekly for three and one-half hours and informally at other times when necessary. They also used the time to conference with students or parents, using a translator (a student or staff member) if needed.

Collaborative Learning

In classrooms at International the emphasis is on active learning. The entire school operates around a student-centered classroom, using small heterogeneous groups. While students work in groups, the teacher takes on the role of facilitator and orchestrator, helping both individuals and groups.

Students aren't grouped according to particular language, age, grade, or achievement levels. This diversity in groups gives novice English language learners many good models to learn from and the opportunity to grow as they work through a unit together.

Speaking one's native tongue is welcomed in groups where novice learners may rely greatly on peers to assist in clarifying language and meaning. Students who share a native language help each other to understand an issue in English. Yet, English is the main language at International. It is usually the only common language for students working collaboratively and becomes the tool to successfully completing the written and oral requirements for a topic. Students come to see that they need to open English conversations with others in their groups in order to succeed.

Younger students also watch as older students begin preparing their graduation portfolios. Younger students become privy to the college application process and how older students enroll

in college classes in the community college that surrounds them. The whole idea of college becomes so ingrained and such a fact of life that once they hit their senior year the question is not "Will I ever be accepted to college?" but "Which college will I go to?" This collaborative learning environment lets students make full use of the diversity at hand in their group, and within their class. Future attendance at a college becomes such a part of the fabric of the classroom at International High School that it truly lifts most students to a goal of college study. The school is very successful in numbers of students accepted to college – over 90% in 1997-98.

The faculty and staff at International believe they must model the kind of collaborative approach they expect of their students; therefore they themselves work collaboratively on many levels – within their teams, across teams, and on schoolwide committees. One teacher credits this kind of collaborative working environment with promoting "First and foremost, a feeling of self-confidence and broadens the scope of what she can produce." (Deutch, 1990). The school is exemplary, too, in that Principal Eric Nadelstern constantly acknowledges and congratulates teachers and students for their successes and extra efforts. He is an exceptional leader and highly respected.

Peer Support and Peer Evaluation Teams

Teachers within each interdisciplinary team interact with each other actively and in a meaningful context. More experienced teachers are able to share their wisdom and experience, while less experienced teachers offer fresh insight. Everyone learns. Within the team, individuals set their goals, as well as collaborate on team goals.

In addition, all teachers are reviewed by peer evaluation teams (PETs) that are put together by the Personnel Committee. Non-tenured teachers are reviewed annually, and issues of appointment and tenure discussed. Tenured teachers are reviewed every three years, but write a yearly self evaluation. In the process of review, teachers make a presentation to their peer evaluation team. This is an opportunity for the teacher to discuss his/her accomplishments and goals for the future. During the year, each teacher keeps a portfolio that includes an administrative evaluation, peer evaluations, self evaluations, and two class sets of student evaluations for each semester, and this portfolio is reviewed at the PET presentation.

The peer evaluation team considers the portfolio, the candidate's presentation, and recommendations of the teacher's teaching team before deciding on its own recommendation. (Slater's PET presentation is described in a later section.) The entire PET process mirrors to a great extent the presentation students make at the end of each semester when they present their portfolios, have them reviewed by teachers and peers, and discuss their accomplishments and goals. Eric Nadelstern, principal of International, pointed out that once teachers became comfortable with putting together portfolios and evaluating themselves and peers on the basis of their own public presentations, only then were they ready to offer such a process to their students. Then, he said, when teachers were comfortable with examining their own work, they could offer ways for students to participate in a similar kind of evaluation process (3/26/98).

Schoolwide Evaluation

Each year the school itself conducts an end-of-year evaluation report. In 1996-97 this report reviewed curriculum and instruction, student support services, long- and short-range planning, management of public relations, staff and personnel management, and personal and professional development. It is evidence that the faculty are involved in thinking about what has worked and what has not; what has been successfully implemented and what needs fine tuning; objectives for the coming year; and a schedule for implementing those objectives.

For example, in the 1996-97 school evaluation, one instructional goal was to have 90% of candidates for graduation "meet or exceed Regents standards in English, math, science, and social studies as determined by graduation certification panels which will review candidates' portfolios and hear candidates' presentations." It was decided that the school would develop, refine, and pilot rubrics based on those standards in the following year.

Such action clearly shows how the school is constantly striving to improve already commendable graduation rates, and is looking at ways of improving the assessment practices already in place. Again, the school as a whole considers goals, past and future, as the road to improvement and development.

Graduation Requirements

Students' progress is constantly monitored, they are given feedback, and they are assisted in preparing performance-based assessment tasks. Once students have successfully completed three years of course work, they each receive a faculty mentor and become a candidate for graduation. To graduate, students must successfully complete a minimum of four years of interdisciplinary study. They must also be certified by a panel including faculty, students, and representatives from the community as part of their petition to graduate. In their fourth year, students are assisted by their mentors in putting together their graduation portfolios – which consist of performance-based assessment tasks selected from their course work, as well as other pieces of work that show evidence of growth and mastery – and in preparing for their presentations. The graduation certification panels are scheduled during January, June, and August.

Each graduation certification panel meets for about two hours to:

- frame questions and discuss the graduation portfolio (without student present)
- hear the presentation and discuss it with the candidate
- deliberate and come to consensus on whether the student has met graduation criteria
- inform the student of the results

Certification for graduation is based on the consensus of the panel, and the graduation is subject to successful completion of course work. It is a rigorous undertaking to prepare a graduation portfolio.

Learning a Language

International operates from the belief that literacy learning (reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking) occurs in a meaningful context and in a language-rich environment. The classroom focus is on quality, in-depth work, rather than isolated skills. Expectations are high and varied for each student. Novice English language learners are given the same assignments as those more experienced. Novices are expected to use the collaborative environment to ask for help from other students and to make use of their native language as an avenue into the collective

learning experience. In having to work in a group and to constantly share thoughts and information, students become familiar with the language of sharing and of asking questions, and they begin the journey to becoming skillful communicators in English. For example, Nikolas, a student in Slater's class, explains:

> When we do an activity, we have to work as a group so somebody definitely understands the question or we cannot solve it. We talk between us and we help each other. . . . It's good to work as a group because you have to talk to them in English, and that's how you learn.

In addition, continued development of their native languages is fundamental to learning at International. Teachers see themselves as teachers of language as well as content. They have incorporated language development techniques into their teaching, regardless of the subject they teach, and they place high priority on language growth. Teachers work to provide purposeful use of English as well as of the students' native languages. In class, when the teacher is not fluent in the language of the group (s)he is assisting, (s)he discusses the material in English. Students may return to their native languages when the teacher leaves. If they need more assistance, the teacher helps students locate the resources they need. The focus on native language development at International has also fostered the development of relationships between the school and the students' ethno-linguistic communities. International supports its students with a variety of native language materials, an effort provided in part by an Improved School Services grant from the state.

Evidence of Success at International High School

The school strives to lessen the existing gap of achievement between immigrant students and native speakers of English. It has won many national and state awards, and competes more than favorably with similar inner city schools in terms of student achievement.

English Language Acquisition Gains. In 1995-96, 65.4% of students in New York City achieved mandated gains in English language proficiency. At International, 70.5% of students achieved mandated gains in English language proficiency.

Pass Rates. In 1996-97, 93% of all International students passed all classes. In New York City, 2/3 of students fail one of their classes, and almost ½ fail more than one of their classes.

Time to Graduation. In New York City, 48.45% of the class of 1997 graduated after just four years of high school, with 35.7% still enrolled; 15.9% had dropped out. Students at International High School, on the other hand, saw 66.7% graduate after four years of high school, 33.3% were still enrolled, and 0% had dropped out.

High Retention Rates. International has a very low drop out rate – 1.7% of those who entered ninth grade in 1992 and 10th grade in 1993 dropped out. In New York City overall, the drop out rate for similar students was 16.4%.

High Attendance Rate. In 1997, the attendance rate was 95.1% at International, while in similar schools it was 85.7%.

High College Acceptance Rate. In 1996-97, 91.8% of International students were accepted to college (58.7% were accepted to a four-year college; 33.1% were accepted to a two-year college).

Recognitions and Awards. International High School has been on the cutting edge of reform and innovation since its inception in 1985. Its personnel procedures, peer evaluation, peer hiring, and peer support strategies have been adopted in the Board's contract with the United Federation of Teachers as a school-based option for all public schools in New York City. The United States Department of Education has twice conferred on International an Academic Excellence Dissemination grant over two three-year periods, from 1992-95 and 1996-99. In 1998 International received the National Award for Model Professional Development from the U.S. Department of Education. In 1992, Marsha S. Slater received the New York State English Council Teacher of Excellence Award. In 1989, International's principal, Eric Nadelstern, received the Distinguished Service Award from the State chapter of TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages).

The school hosts over a thousand visitors a year, and news articles on International have appeared in many publications including *The New York Times*, *New York Newsday*, *Daily News*, and *Harvard Educational Review*.

Special programs

Because newly arrived immigrants can be overwhelmed by personal, economic, and

adjustment issues, International provides a strong support system to students and their parents. The school maintains links with its community by offering, for example, ESL classes to parents. It also gives information on college enrollment, financial aid, and health insurance. Parents come to see the caring nature of the school, and the warm embrace it offers their children.

Guidance Counselors. In 1997-98, the school changed its approach to guidance. Previously, Personnel Services (Guidance) worked out of centralized offices behind closed doors; counselors would be consulted by school faculty when necessary. Now, however, each team includes a guidance counselor, who teaches one class four days a week and devotes the remaining time to providing support for students and parents, including helping with college applications. Now that guidance counselors are on every team, students feel more connected in ways that eliminate anonymity. Principal Nadelstern applauded the change as enormously beneficial, and said that by the end of March 1998 there had not been a single suspension all year, whereas "three years ago we had 30, two years ago we had 15, last year we had 10" (3/26/98). Slater has become the guidance counselor for her team.

Student Tutoring. When a student is having problems in class, another student may be hired to help tutor the student. Money is set aside in each team's budget for this purpose, and it is entirely a team issue to decide which student needs the support. Often a student who speaks the same native language will work with the struggling student.

Clubs. Wednesday afternoons are set aside for student clubs. These include the International Club, Live Music Club, Latino Club, Chinese Club, and Sports Club, as well as seminars on the PSAT/SAT. The clubs give students the opportunity to make new friends, enjoy old ones, and share culture and language. Clubs organize films, lunches, dances, concerts, trips, and presentations.

College Connections. International students have full access to LaGuardia Community College's facilities including the library, computer rooms, gym, pool, and cafeterias. Usually by their junior year students can opt to take college classes, and International faculty assist students with enrollment. Faculty also meet with LaGuardia faculty to discuss writing, expectations, and problems in college courses. College faculty are sometimes invited to help in teaching part of a course at International, and some International teachers also work at the community college.

Internships. International is linked with two other high schools (all associated with LaGuardia Community College) in a career education program that combines a rigorous

curriculum with internships that place students in government agencies, businesses, schools, hospitals, and non-profit institutions around the city. An internship experience is part of International's graduation requirements. The interns work, usually without pay, for academic credit and work experience. In 1996-97 students worked 13 weeks, four hours a day, four days a week. The schools have published a comprehensive index of organizations willing to take interns specifying the position available, travel directions, a brief description of the organization, qualifications, and responsibilities. At the conclusion of the internship, students develop an internship album.

Wide Professional Networks

International has a number of important formal links with other high schools either in the area or who adopt similar philosophies. For example, it is a member of Ted Sizer's "Coalition of Essential Schools."

International is also part of the Alternative High Superintendency of New York City. This group of smaller high schools tends to target particular student populations and have specific foci. These schools are often granted waivers from city and state requirements. For example, International has a waiver to allow the school to hire teachers outside the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) rules and regulations as well as a waiver from requiring students to take New York State's Regents exams.

Within the framework of the Alternative High Schools, there is a partnership among three schools: International High School, Jackson High School established in 1993, and Grandtown High School (both pseudonyms) established in 1994. All three provide a multicultural alternative educational environment, and all serve limited English proficient student populations. The two newer schools, Jackson and Grandtown, are modeled after International.

Regular contact among faculty at the three Partnership schools encourages professional growth in mutually supportive ways. Teachers share ideas and target energies toward specific reform. For example, the Partnership schools have met frequently to discuss the new state standards. Faculty and administrators from the three schools participated in a three-day retreat in March 1997. The goal was to create viable performance-based assessments, because it's "the best

chance for LEP kids to have a world class education." (Nadelstern, 3/7/97). Each school brought a list of performance-based assessment tasks that met or exceeded the state and national standards. At the retreat, they created a master list and then broke into heterogeneous groups composed of faculty and administrators from each school to tackle the following tasks: 1) compiling performance-based assessment tasks for the matrix; 2) determining how and when to assess student work; and 3) deciding "how good is good enough," i.e., developing rubrics.

PART 2: MARSHA S. SLATER'S PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Marsha S. Slater is one of the founding teachers at International High School. When asked for a metaphor of herself as a teacher, she offers this: "being an adult but seeing the world through the eyes of a child, like e.e. cummings" (5/8/97). She has master's degrees in anthropology and Education Administration and Supervision, and completed her Ph.D. in English Education in 1994. She has been teaching for 29 years, mostly English, and has served as an associate professor at New York University. She has tremendous professional experience as a workshop leader, teacher trainer, and New York City Writing Project course coordinator. She has presented at numerous conferences locally and out of state; for example, she's given presentations at five conferences of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). She has made presentations at local universities and colleges. In 1992 she won the New York State English Council "Teacher of Excellence" award. She has also won fellowships and grants such as an NCTE Researcher Grant and an NEH fellowship at Dartmouth. In addition, Slater has published widely. Clearly her professional career is marked by excellence and extraordinary achievements. But Slater does not sit back on her laurels; she continues in a life-long learning mode.

Slater acknowledges that she experienced a pivotal change in her teaching while she was involved in The New York City Writing Project more than halfway through her career. Before this project she had believed the teacher's role was to transmit knowledge to students. She saw herself as a good teacher, was mentoring others constantly, and was winning awards for her teaching. She says that "all I had ever experienced or been told or known, was transmission teaching." She explains that:

> . . .[I] thought that I was doing the students good when I sat with my feet up and a red pen in my hand for 17 years in a row marking book reports or essays, weekend after weekend after weekend, that I was doing them a favor and doing the right thing. After years and years and years and years of doing that and seeing almost no carryover between the red pen marks on the paper and the way they wrote their next composition. . . . Then for me the real eye opener that totally transformed me as a teacher was The New York City Writing Project . . . I was totally transformed from being burned out and wanting to leave. . . . (6/26/97)

She also took a couple of Writing Project residential courses in London and Oxford with Nancy Martin, Jimmy Britton and Pat Barrett. Her intense interest in theory and learning encouraged her to begin a Ph.D., which focused on a mathematics teacher's explorations with writing to learn with limited English proficient students. She sees reflective thinking and practice as well as the input of theory to be the biggest influences on her professional life. She explains:

> When I was in The [New York City] Writing Project, we read theory and practiced theory. We experienced theory. I saw the connection, and then I was hungry for more theory to change my practice because I was dissatisfied with my practice. (5/5/97)

Slater is a member of professional organizations such as NCTE and subscribes to several professional journals. She has done the circuit of conferences, both as presenter and as listener, and has come to believe that her own knowledge and experience hold validity and richness. She constantly reflects on her practice. She has been instrumental in introducing the "Writing-to-Learn" approach in the school, and peers look up to her experience and knowledge. She has chaired the Curriculum Committee at International for a number of years.

The Role Reflection and Evaluation Play in Slater's Professional Experience

At International, teachers keep portfolios and are reviewed by peer evaluation teams (PETs) composed of teachers from throughout the school. In 1997, Slater, a tenured teacher, presented her portfolio to a peer evaluation team. The portfolio revealed the importance of reflection in Slater's professional growth. It showed the extent to which she reflects on how things play out in the classroom as well as looks forward and sets goals. Her self evaluation included the following statements:

> This year I have consciously made major changes in my professional life. . . . Last year I taught 90 pre-service teachers four hours a week over the course of the year at NYU. . . . I decided for my sanity and health not to repeat it this year. . . . While in the throes of that decision, I was given two alternatives: 1) I was approached by R. T. to work with a team of two . . . student teachers for the year, and 2) Judith Langer at SUNY Albany asked me to participate in a two-year observational/interview study in English/language arts learning and the professional growth of English teachers. I chose to do both. . . . Both experiences have made me examine my daily practice, my theory in action, my beliefs and reflective routines.
>
> . . . it is invaluable to be able to reflect on practice with [the SUNY research assistant] in-depth, as I did at the Partnership retreat in March. . . . By trying to construct a coherent picture for her of the influences on my practice, my theoretical underpinnings, the reasoning behind my pedagogical decisions, I got to deconstruct and reconstruct some of my own understandings of my professional life.
>
> . . . because I was required to put formal student evaluations in my portfolio, I had the opportunity to ask our students to give me written feedback. . . .
>
> . . . I have folded [my two student teachers] Roger and Charles into the evaluation process. Since they have been with me on a steady basis since October, who better to write my peer evaluation?
>
> . . . I have learned to welcome support and have come to rely on feedback and considerable team work.
>
> . . . For me, teaching isn't about getting information into someone else's head. It's about watching someone learn to take responsibility for himself and others. It's about enabling and cajoling others to discover and follow their bliss. It's about that '80s word — empowerment.

In her portfolio, Slater also reflected on her observation of her own team:

> . . . If we continue to get activity essays and final topic essays which make trivial connections and show superficial understanding of the topic and the themes of the course, then we must rethink how we teach. We may need to rewrite activity guides to include questions specifically designed to create a scaffolded dialogue within the group and again during the mastery question debriefing specifically on the subtopic concept.

Slater's two student teachers included the following statements:

> To work with Marsha is to get inside her mind, to expose yourself to real issues, to take a walk along the same shore with a peer thick in the theory and practice of teaching, sharing, everything. . . . (Roger)

> . . . most of her comments to and conversations with the students [re: assessment] are used to focus students on their thinking processes, to guide them to make connections between the activities, the subtopics and topics of the semester, and their lives. This way of assessing is very beneficial to the students because it gives them a sense of where they are in the learning process. (Charles)
>
> . . . Marsha is a reflective person — it certainly shows in her practice — and she was gracious enough to reflect aloud, which was probably the best way for me to be introduced to teaching and learning. (Charles)

Slater's portfolio not only gave her the opportunity to reflect on herself as a teacher, peer, and team member, but also highlights the network sharing that is encouraged by such a process. As a teacher, Slater is linked to a wider community of students, student teachers, team teachers, and teachers from other teams. Her strengths are invited to be shared in the wider community, just as areas of growth or concern invite supportive discussion.

The protocol for the peer evaluation team at International is for the panel members and visitors to read the teacher's portfolio and agree upon questions to ask. The teacher is then invited to give a short presentation. During Slater's presentation, one of the peer-evaluators was intrigued with her discussion of metacognitive journals. He asked for and received a thorough explanation of how she used them with her students, and she gave him guidelines she had written for students, "The Metacognitive Journal: A Place to Reflect" (see Appendix A). He said he was now going to restructure the way he used journals in his classroom to reflect Slater's model and share these ideas with his interdisciplinary team. Later, another peer-evaluator said that Slater's comments about working as a team validated her own thoughts and experiences. All of the teachers involved in Slater's peer review – Slater and the peer-evaluators – felt professionally nourished from the experience.

The publication, "Personnel Procedures: Peer Selection, Support, and Evaluation at the International High School," states:

> If we view ourselves as effective educators, we must also view ourselves as learners. We are role models for our students. If we model authority, our students will learn to be authoritarian. If we model self-improvement in an atmosphere of sharing, that is what our students will learn.

Slater's Work on Her Team

Each of International's six teams of teachers meets regularly to plan and discuss issues of curriculum, instruction, concern about individual students or teachers, and other pressing issues. Slater is part of the Motion team. The team's interdisciplinary themes for the two semesters are "Motion" and "Visibility/Invisibility." According to Slater, "The way my team works is professional development!" (2/5/97). As stated previously, the team meets formally twice weekly for a minimum of three and one-half hours weekly to discuss issues of curriculum and the students themselves. They also meet informally whenever necessary. A common complaint is that there is never enough time to sit and plan. The team made some curricular changes for their fall 1997 semester based on their reflections on the previous year's classes such as deciding to increase the emphasis on research papers. The previous semester the team made extensive curricular changes based on their evaluations of students' portfolios, mastery statements, and comments. Among these changes, several writing activities were added, for example, science logs; daily metacognitive journals; additional essays; literature letters; and portfolio reviews conducted twice a semester in small peer groups with at least two teachers present.

When necessary, the teachers meet with students to discuss issues of concern regarding their work. The whole team sits with the student at issue, being supportive on the one hand, yet finding ways collectively to resolve or improve the problem at hand, be it tardiness or not completing work.

At one particular meeting a father was invited in as the team was concerned about his son's lack of work, despite repeated conversations with the student. The meeting was wholly supportive, and the parent, with limited English, spoke through a translator, a family worker from the front office. This lengthy conversation with the parent resulted in a marked improvement in the work ethic of the student, which he and others commented on in his conference at the end of the year. The team genuinely cares about students, but more importantly, acts when necessary.

Team meetings are a time when the teachers share ideas, bring in materials they think may be useful to others, or simply ask for input on particular issues. At the team level, too, teachers reflect on goals and accomplishments and strive for improvement. The team always meets in Slater's room, which has a computer, so they can, for example, write up the new portfolio cover

sheets for students, or list team goals. Slater sits at the helm and types while the team offers input. There is no leader or head of department; everyone contributes substantively and equally. Yet clearly Slater is revered as the most experienced and the one who has been mentoring two of the newer team members. The team supports and nurtures its teachers and helps if problems arise. The team also supports several student teachers, and looks forward to their help and input in the classroom. In 1997 the team had five student teachers.

The Motion team has undergone significant change in the last few years. Tony Brachman, who originally developed the "Motion" curriculum, had been a charismatic member of the team until 1996 when he retired. His absence caused a vacuum at first, but eventually resulted in some progressive changes for the team. For example, the curricular changes mentioned above have strengthened the program significantly. Most of these changes stem from Slater, who had been reluctant to suggest substantive curricular changes when Tony was a member of the team, since they were such good friends. Slater's student teacher, Charles, describes how Slater became more of a leader on the team in his peer evaluation written for her portfolio:

> Marsha has taken a leadership role in the team this year, working closely with her fellow team members. The team as a whole has taken the initiative to examine how they can better help the students toward deeper, more meaningful understanding of the subject matter. Marsha provided many of the ideas the team discussed and eventually implemented, and helped the team to examine the feasibility of all suggestions by drawing from her experiences and the conclusions they have led her to. This was especially so when the conversations turned to using writing more effectively throughout the curriculum (Charles 5/22/97).

PART 3: HOW ENGLISH IS EXPERIENCED IN SLATER'S CLASSROOM

Slater's classroom is a relaxed yet busy place. The small windowless room is crammed with cupboards, tables and chairs in permanent groups, and students. Slater refers to the room as a "human sandwich." Students are usually working in groups on activity guides while Slater keeps a low profile, moving from group to group. It all appears to work effortlessly, yet Slater's every move seems to have a purpose.

During one classroom observation, students were working in their groups on the activity guide for the poem, "Southbound on the Freeway." Everything in this lesson seemed to be

moving by itself, students were on task, and lots and lots of talk was going on. An apparent lack of teacher control was, in fact, framed by explicit expectations on the part of the teacher – all were to use their groups to move their understandings forward, the activity guide had to be finished, and if groups were ready to debrief they had to indicate so to Slater. Students were asking questions and going back to the poem.

Slater began by sitting with one group explaining how language is learned: that just as they do experiments in science, so language learning means making mistakes. She quietly talked with another student, Anna, regarding the literature letter she had written to her partner. Anna had written a summary instead of responding to the book and giving her opinion. Slater was upping the ante and telling Anna about what more needed to go in the letter. Meanwhile, in another group, Cheng, a complete beginner in English, used an electronic dictionary to plod through translating the poem word for word, conversing in Chinese with Wei, a sophomore. Manuel suddenly invited Wei into the group conversation: "How is poetry different to stories and newspapers?" Wei replied quietly: "This has rhythm." In yet another group, Maria was explaining how a news article is written differently, and at one point turned to a specific group member and asked in Spanish how to say "rima" ("rhyme") in English.

On the top of the front wall of Slater's room hangs a slogan printed by a previous student. It reads: "Give a man a fish and you feed him a day; teach him how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." Slater spent time quietly relating the slogan to a student who wanted to know how to spell a word. She told him that if he learned how to strategize spelling, to look for patterns over time, he would learn to spell the word and teach it to himself. But if she just told him how to spell the word, it would be like giving him a fish.

Slater is guided by patience. When students clearly don't understand and their group can't help them, she talks one-on-one with them and gives them time to sift through things. The process of acculturation takes time – it can take time to get used to the other students and to the patterns and rhythms of this classroom.

Slater feels that in order for students to learn language, they "need to swim in it." (6/26/97) In her classroom, students are truly swamped in talk, literature, reading, writing, and thinking, which together form a rich language environment. Anyone familiar with the typical scenario of an ESL classroom – students silently working through a worksheet, vocabulary words first, then

simple low level comprehension questions to test their understanding or lack thereof – would be amazed at the way in which these ESL students were talking purposefully and seriously about this poem, trying to tease it apart.

In order to give a full sense of how English is experienced in Slater's classroom, the important components of this classroom's English instruction are discussed below: student groups, student talk, writing, reading, thinking, and assessment.

Student Groups

Slater strongly believes that group work serves as the basis of learning. Students need language to manage and organize their groups and also to develop understandings and interpretations of what they read. They can choose to use their native language, if there are other speakers in the group, but clearly English is the language of choice, to succeed.

Slater has a deep-down trust in her students' ability to figure things out for themselves, whether it be spelling patterns, genre issues, comprehension, or vocabulary. Slater insists that students think about their questions first themselves and with their group. If students come to her with a question, she asks, "Have you asked your group?" Slater is not the only holder of knowledge, and so encourages students to find the language to ask questions of the group, and then to construct their answers.

Composition of Groups. Throughout the school, small heterogeneous groups of students of all grades (9-12) engage in projects for which they construct knowledge with careful coaching by the teacher. At the beginning of each new topic, Slater sets time aside for regrouping, when students choose new groups. Importance is attached to the selection process as students come to realize that their work will be affected by all students cooperating and working effectively together. Slater's rules for forming groups are:

- no more than two speakers of the same language
- a balance of gender, language experience, and age.

The heterogeneity of groups sees older and younger students working together, learning from each other. The older students serve as models, what Vygotsky (1978) called "the more

knowledgeable other." Students with greater language proficiency provide leadership within the group, modeling ways to participate, ways to discuss, and ways to think. Slater applauds heterogeneity. She said:

> I just keep my ears open to how they're doing in their groups. I mean that's one of the great things about having older students, because they do take the new ones under their wing and show them the ropes, and every kid has figured out how to work in a group, where to go for help. We watch from a safe distance to let them figure it out and gain the confidence themselves, and do as little spoonfeeding as possible. (11/24/87)

Learning to Participate in a Group. Students come to International bringing their past school experiences from their native countries, as well as some experience from being in American schools. Most seem not to have experienced a student-centered school such as International where group work forms the basis of learning. This is a big adjustment. Slater is aware of the extra scaffolding needed at the beginning of the year to help "students feeling their way through things." This is the time they ask a lot of logistical questions. Slater, however, trusts her notions of learning, but more, trusts her students: "The whole structure has to sink in for them first." (10/15/97)

Students are given tremendous freedom, which comes with learning to be responsible for their learning, and clearly it takes time for new students to adjust. Thomas, a freshman, took a long while to settle into purposeful group work, preferring to play and joke around. While he had no other speaker of his native languages (French and Lingala), he was also inexperienced in speaking English. Rosa, the natural leader in the group, often tried to bring order and she later commented:

> I am like the babysitter of Thomas. Now I don't care to do that, you know, because I want the best for him, you know, and not just for him, for my own group, because my grades depend on all the people who are in my group. . . . He's changed a lot. He's very quiet now. Now he's more interested in his work and I feel so proud of him. (1/7/98)

Another student, Erica, suddenly blossomed in the late winter after students didn't want to include her in their group on regrouping day. Slater spoke to her privately about the "subtext" of that painful ostracism. She realized that her lack of effort and laziness stood in her way, and in the next topic, thrust herself headlong into focused group work. She emerged as a leader, and shone when she took a novice student under her wing.

Given the heterogeneous nature of groups, novice students have ample opportunity to learn group dynamics simply by looking to older or more experienced students. Slater admits that the older students are good models because "they've figured out their priorities and they tell the other kids to stop fooling around and to get to work."

Students learn to juggle the tensions and balances within the group with regard to personal identity, group connectedness, and individuality and connectedness (Langer, 1995). Tension in a group needs to be not only recognized but articulated by group members. Many times in the year, individuals expressed frustration and exasperation with group members who hadn't completed their work by the deadline the group had decided. For example, in December one group was ready to debrief, and found that Ju-Xing was still not finished, even though they had already given him a two-day extension:

Manuel:	Ju-Xing, you finished?
Ju-Xing:	(shakes his head and looks down)
Manuel:	(to the others) He didn't finish the activity. We all did it and he's the only one who haven't finished it.
Maria:	(to Ju-Xing) Have you finished this?
Ju-Xing:	(shakes head and looks down)
Maria:	(to the others) He told me he was going to finish it for today. She's not gonna debrief us if you're not finished. Jesus Christ, come on Ju-Xing. Come on, we're depending on you. (Maria continues to express frustration in English, then vent in Spanish with Manuel) You haven't finished?
Payal:	We are going to start doing the learning log?
Maria:	I'm going to start because we cannot do Motion. He haven't finished.
Payal:	We can if we like help him finish the activity.
Maria:	I have helped him. I have told him.
Manuel:	(to Ju-Xing) I have given you my Activity.
Payal:	What if he don't finish it tomorrow either?
Manuel:	We could just start another activity. We could just start it.
Maria:	We talk with Marsha and tell her . . . we cannot do anything here because of this. Why don't we talk with Marsha and tell her to debrief us and then she could debrief us because we're really losing time. OK you gonna be the one who's gonna call her?
Manuel:	Me?
Payal:	Okay I'll call her, and you explain like what you want to do.

Manuel: Okay, okay. I call her, you whisper.

Maria: (vents in Spanish with Manuel) he's gotta accept what's going on you know. We're gonna be stuck in this. Miss (to Slater) we want to debrief! He's not finished. We have told him two days, but we are here, we are ready to debrief, and he's not finished so we want you to debrief us. (12/11/97)

Several things are interesting about the conversation above. We can see students adopting and negotiating various roles — Who will call the teacher? Students openly express their frustration at Ju-Xing. Some float ideas about what to do — start new work or debrief now. It is clear these students have learned to function as a group. All members of the group must finish work by the date they determine together, and, if things go astray, it is the group's task to try and resolve the problem. They have learned how to discuss issues that are important to them. We get a clear sense of community — the group chastises Ju-Xing for not fulfilling the role expected of him. The conversation also points to something remarkable: while traditional ESL classes spend a great deal of time drilling verb tenses, here, students purposefully use a whole host of verb tenses, in context.

The Students as Teachers. Slater believes "if there are 24 students in the class, then there are 25 teachers." More experienced language users take on the role of teachers for the less experienced, who in turn over time become teachers themselves. Within the intimate group setting, students feel comfortable asking questions and helping each other. It is less threatening and involves less risk taking than speaking out in a larger group.

Developing a Community. Over time, the group and then the whole class grows to be a safe environment where the novice student sees there are others struggling for words or confounded by a piece of literature. As trust develops and relationships grow, a community evolves. Students come to see how this community benefits them. As shown above, students transform through participation in activities of their group, and of their community (Rogoff, 1994). They have learned ways to behave, participate in a group, and use that knowledge to move themselves forward into different roles. Both Thomas and Erica stopped playing around and focused on their work, and the group, annoyed at Ju-Xing who hadn't finished his work, felt empowered when they successfully convinced Slater that she should debrief them without Ju-Xing, despite their helping him and giving him more time. For his part, Ju-Xing learned first hand the consequences of not fulfilling his role in the group.

Student Talk

It is easy for an observer to take the group talk in Slater's classroom for granted. Student talk is an inherent and natural part of learning — the glue that holds everything else together (reading, writing, and thinking). That is certainly not the case in other high school classrooms, where even students in mainstream classrooms get to talk very little (Nystrand, Gamoran & Carbonaro, 1998). Speakers of languages other than English actually get to *talk even less* in class (Arreaga-Mayer & Perdomo-Rivera, 1996). Very little authentic talk occurs in the run of the mill ESL class, at any level. In looking for clues as to why Slater's is an exemplary classroom, here lies one: classroom discourse is valued and used as a tool.

Learning How to Participate in Discussions. As shown above, students quickly learn the social rules and appropriate language for discussion — how to enter a discussion, question, respond, challenge, and disagree. They also learn ways to discuss literature. Because Slater's class works in groups, each group finds its own way of working through a piece of literature, but all are scaffolded by the teacher prepared activity guides, which offer the questions to be considered. The activity guide leads the group through central issues related to the literature and therefore guides, in a macro way, their group discussion. Before reading the short story "To Build a Fire," for example, students had prereading questions to answer:

> 1. "The more you move the longer you live." Discuss with your group and decide what you think this sentence means about people physically and mentally. Each person should write the answers in his or her own words.

This question focused the group on trying to understand the saying. Later, once they had read the story, the group members had to write down any questions they had and then discuss them with the group. Another series of questions focused on a plot summary, the ending, the conflict, and the theme, and so they led students to consider and understand the genre. The activity guide also asks four "mastery questions," which get to the philosophical and conceptual ideas of the story, and which students must answer for debriefing. (See Appendix B for a sample activity guide.)

While the activity guide might sound restrictive and teacher-dominated to some, the thrust of group discussion centers very much on students' own questions, in relation to the bigger

teacher-chosen questions. Most students were confused about exactly what happened in certain parts of "To Build a Fire."

For example, in one group, Esperanza said "I don't get this here. The man wants to go to the gold mine there. I don't get it. I don't know why he say that." Payal and Manuel immediately hopped in to help her. Payal pointed Esperanza to the exact part of the text that helped her, and then she consulted with Manuel in Spanish to see if "mine" is "la mina." The conversation faded, but then Manuel piped up:"Who's Jack London?" Later Maria asked: "How you feel about the end?" This conversation was typical of the way students had their own agendas as they worked through the activity guide. They were guided by it, but also jumped to the aid of other students who needed help. Discourse framed the investigation: where the question had to be formed, confidence had to be mustered to ask it, and then a break in the conversation had to be recognized to finally state the question.

The above conversation is interesting, too, because it shows how students weave in and out of different orientations toward understanding the story (Langer, 1992). All the time, the ESL student seems to be alert to gain specific information: What does this word mean? What is this word in English/Spanish? What does this idiom mean? How do you spell this word? Langer calls this seeking of information "a point of reference orientation."

When readers engage in a literary experience, their orientation can be called reaching toward a "horizon of possibilities" (Langer, 1995). In such an orientation, the reader explores the possibilities of the text as it is read, and understandings may change as the story unfolds. The focus is on developing a personal interpretation. This orientation does not occur all the time in Slater's class, because much of the group talk centers around a point of reference orientation, where students are figuring out the literal meanings of what they read.

However, Slater pushes them to engage further in a literary experience through the mastery questions in the activity guide. These mastery questions are discussed orally in the debriefing, in writing in the essays that connect ideas across interdisciplinary lines, and in individual conversations that students have with Slater. The conventional recitation structure for classroom participation, where only the teacher has power to ask questions and the student has an obligation to answer them correctly, has no place here.

The talk Slater herself uses in class is in itself real and articulate. Many people, teachers

included, feel they have to speak slowly and need to simplify their language when talking with students who speak a language other then English (and often that means talking loudly, too). Yet as Slater debriefs a group on their reading and discussion of "To Build a Fire" she doesn't simplify her language as she recounts what students have said so far. Instead, she encourages them to think deeper: "You're using the text to help you understand, exactly. So (he) ignores the journey partially because he has no imagination, partially because he's incredibly stubborn, all right. He wants to do what he wants to do. What do you think his going on the journey anyway, says about human beings?" The language she uses could easily be part of an exemplary mainstream classroom group discussion. She does not water it down. Her assumption is that students understand, and if they don't, they'll ask or figure it out.

Slater believes in the multilayering of language and its effect on language learning. Learning to discuss within the group prepares for the debriefing experience in which she wants students to talk about their understandings of the literature. The debriefing discussion prepares students for their participation in the more public grade conference twice a semester. In their grade conferences, each student has to talk about their learning so far and about what they are proud of. Teachers and peers give their reflections and assessments of the student's learning, and the student learns to defend and perhaps challenge a grade or comment given. This all leads to the final graduation portfolio meeting in the senior year where, in two hours, the student gives a presentation and answers questions from a committee. (See assessment sections above and below for more details.)

One of the crucially positive gains of centering learning around community is the gradual development of voice in the student, an academic voice that is specific to situations such as debriefing, grade conferences, and the graduation conference. It is as though the student earns his *academic clothing* in this rite of passage from the small beginnings in the group to a powerful presentation for graduation. Academic language is made explicit. Students learn the importance of the academic clothing: look confident, look your audience in the eye, speak assertively, speak clearly, speak intelligently, think critically. One example of someone who gained this academic clothing is Nina, a Spanish-speaking beginner, who sat timidly and quietly at first, eyes glued to the text. For over a semester, other Spanish speakers sat and translated with her. Gradually, she started to ask quiet vocabulary questions, her writing increased in bulk, she began to make eye

contact and then Erica befriended her. From there, Nina just blossomed, and Slater proudly announced at the end of the spring semester, "You know that Nina went and challenged Jackie (a Humanities teacher), about her essay grade!" Nina realized the power of voice, of speaking up; she had listened and watched all those months, then seized the opportunity to speak up when she felt insulted by a low grade for a project she had worked so hard on. Nina and others take this ability to develop a voice with them to college and the outside world, where they have to use English to seek help, find a job, advocate for self or family, negotiate grades, challenge decisions, and articulate confidently. Students at International learn how to be successful and how to present a public self. The whole process in Slater's classroom is one of acculturation, day in and day out, and the tool is talk. Slater is patient and allows them to "figure it out."

Social studies and science often float naturally in and out of conversations in Slater's class, as students make connections with the interdisciplinary approach. Another genre of talk that finds its way into Slater's class is of a personal and social nature. This is the "coffee talk" where students talk about personal information, all apparently "off task." Yolanda talks about her boyfriend/mother problem, Anna tells how her employer rounds off to the nearest dollar and omits 24 cents of her pay each week, and Alejandro talks about diabolic music in gruesome detail.

All this "chit-chat" is an important part of friendship and community building, and draws the most unlikely students together. Slater, too, bonds with her students by joining in conversations, telling of the boyfriend who never bought flowers, and how she wears socks in bed in the winter. Slater explicitly shows that personal sharing of information has its place here. This is the stuff that builds the fires of friendship and creates a sense of community. Students from different language backgrounds use English as the common language to build friendships. We come to see how much language is used and learned through this personal talk, and how it invites people into the conversation.

Native Language. Students' native languages have a legitimate place in Slater's classroom. Books in various languages cram her cupboards, as do dictionaries. These books make a student's native language visible, thus raising its status and giving it validity. Students may choose books in their native language for their literature letters, and complete beginners can write their activity guides using their native language, as long as it is translated. In contrast, most ESL classrooms

check the native languages at the door with the coats.

A student's native language is legitimized as an appropriate resource for learning in this exemplary class (Bakhtin, 1981). Many students, beginner and more experienced, flash back and forth from their native language to English. It is a quick way of confirming the meaning or spelling of a word. Rosa says: "You know it's good to ask in Spanish, so that I can understand better." (1/7/98) Native language is used to develop meaning and comprehension and to confirm understandings. For example, in discussing "To Build a Fire," Manuel suddenly quips in Spanish that the man did not die. He then converses simultaneously with Payal in English and Maria in Spanish, asking for evidence of death. He's finally convinced but not until he finds the exact moment of death, when the students do a close word-for-word reading of the text. Manuel uses Spanish to get to the core of his question and works out the details aloud using Spanish. Other languages are commonly heard in this class to work out understandings. Also, students use their native languages to form friendships and talk about personal and everyday issues.

In their portfolios, students must write letters to their parents in their native languages, and also translate into English the replies from their parents. Using one's native language does not impede the learning of English, rather it supports it. Novice English language learners, particularly, rely on talking in their native language as "a way in" to the group conversation, and as "a way in" to learning English. They themselves determine their transitioning to English. While Slater can encourage from the sidelines, and group members may nudge, too, ultimately it's up to them to make the moves. From feeling awkward, isolated, and afraid to talk, these students are given the time and space to develop their voices.

In this exemplary class, talk has a central role in learning language and in learning content. It is the tool for getting ahead and for success. Students learn ways to discuss and to enter conversations, and they learn that they must talk in order for their questions and concerns to be addressed. Students learn to dance between using their native languages and English, using one to support the other.

In nurturing the classroom community, Slater creates boundless opportunities for talk. She offers interesting and provocative literature for students to read, and she insists that students develop understandings for themselves. It is this search for meaning that gives students much reason to talk.

Writing

Students swim in a rich language environment here, where many good writing models and writing prompts are provided. Although students in typical U.S. schools don't do very much extended writing (Nystrand, Gamoran & Carbonaro, 1998), International High School students write constantly.

As mentioned above, Slater has been part of The New York City Writing Project since 1985, and she credits this association with her adoption of group work and the writing process in her classroom. She does not deal with writing as an isolated activity; rather it is part of the deliberate multilayering of genres, of metacognitive thinking, and of reading, talking, and listening. Students write activity guides, journals, research papers, literature letters, essays, portfolio responses, and other creative pieces. They use writing in a number of ways:

- for information and understanding
- for literary response and expression
- for critical analysis and evaluation
- for social interaction

By writing answers to activity guide questions, students learn to use writing to make their initial thinking and understandings visible. After students have orally debriefed with Slater and discussed the mastery questions from the activity guide, they hand in their activity guides to be marked by Slater. She responds in writing and hands them back, usually to be "redone" and resubmitted for credit. Her purpose is to get students to think more deeply about what they have read. Her notes frequently ask students to explain their answers further. Slater also asks students to create their own activity guides that could be used by other students in later years. Students must also write various types of essays – essays that link what they are learning across the disciplines or integrate what they have learned from their journal writing, research, and reading. Essays need to be turned in on computer disks; it is the students' responsibility to find the college computer rooms and ask for help to learn how to use them.

Students also keep metacognitive journals for writing about what they are learning. Slater was instrumental in introducing metacognitive journals to the team based on her tremendous belief in the power of writing. She created a guide, "The Metacognitive Journal: A Place to

Reflect," (Appendix A) for students to use as a springboard for their journal writing. In the guide she writes:

> Writing is a very powerful way of thinking. It is a way to make sense out of your experiences. It is not just a way to record thinking or experiences. Your journal can be much more than a summary of what you did this cycle. It can help you learn. When you write in your journal, for example, it is very likely that you will discover that there are things that you don't understand. This can be very valuable.

The metacognitive journals are written by each student at the end of the school day, no matter which teacher is teaching then. That teacher consistently collects, reads, and responds to the journal. When Maria wrote (9/9/97) that "I'm not feeling good in my group . . . that we are not working the way I expected, it's just that we all write for our selfs and sometimes we don't even share ideas" then she opened an opportunity for discussion that could nudge the group along. The teacher responded, "Esperanza said the same thing in her diary about the group not working enough together – Maybe you should bring it up." This example is typical of how the students are truly made to be responsible for their learning. If they have a problem, they need to find the words and the right moment to deal with it themselves.

The following are samples of student comments about their daily journal writing. Kristen, who has demonstrated a great deal of language growth in a very short span of time, talked about journal writing in an interview:

> I think that the daily journal helped me a lot, because I was writing about what I did every day. So I could learn new vocabulary, because I could look in the dictionary for new words that I didn't know before. So I think that helped me the most (5/7/97).

Salim is from Syria, where he learned English. He has been in the United States about 10 months, and his English is nearly fluent. He said that of all the English activities, he found the daily journals to be the most helpful and also the most difficult.

Milan is from Bosnia and explains what has helped him learn English. He compares how he learns when he writes freely to how he learns when he completes activity guide questions:

> Maybe it's writing because when you are writing a short story, you are building sentences on your own and you don't have any questions to answer. You have to choose the way to do it by yourself.

In addition, students write "literature letters" each week. They read a chapter of a novel or a short story of their choice and write about what they've read to a chosen partner. The letter is supposed to discuss relationships between the story and the conceptual theme of the course as well as connections to their own lives and the world around them. In addition, they write responses to their partners' weekly letters. Partners pick the same story so that students gain a visceral sense of multiple interpretations of a text. Students need to work out the perfunctory aspects of the literature letters themselves, such as who to pick as a partner and which day to exchange letters.

Mechanics and Grammar. Mechanics and grammar are attended to in context, when a problem arises. Students in this class do not work through worksheets. Traditional notions of "functional literacy" placed heavy emphasis on skill and command of grammar and conventions in ESL and remedial classes. International, however, provides a rich language environment in which students are expected to do extended writing and focus on developing ideas and meanings. Students hear and use the correct grammar and conventions of English daily. Slater attends to individual grammar issues as they arise.

When students find themselves with a grammar problem, they have several options. They can seek to solve the problem themselves, with the aid of a dictionary or computer tools such as spell check or grammar check. They may ask someone in their group, either in their native language or in English. Or, they may seek the help of Slater. When Manuel did not understand the meaning of *handkerchief* when reading *Gulliver's Travels*, Maria, who was reading aloud with him, looked it up in a dictionary and then explained it to Manuel in Spanish (3/18/98).

Slater has several strategies in helping to scaffold students' learning. She may explain the issue in the group, where others, too, may be audience to the discussion. Or she may ask the student to make an appointment for an individual conference in her office. For example, one afternoon, Nikolas needed some grammar help with one of his essays. The following field notes briefly describe Slater's on-the-spot lesson:

> 2:15 – the class has left, Slater gives Nikolas a mini-lesson. She explains what an opening or topic sentence is, and why it's important, and that it's missing from his essay. She talks about the patterns (which is also the theme of the piece) of his grammar mistakes.

In this way Slater acts in accordance with her philosophy: a) she believes that Nikolas is ready to hear her suggestions and b) she looks at patterns of mistakes, not isolated ones. She has him read a problematic section aloud. When he does, he automatically corrects his mistakes; she points this out to him. She says that if he reads his work aloud to himself, he might "hear" the problems that he didn't "see." Also, when he reads aloud, he pauses appropriately where commas and periods should be. She points this out to him as well. She ties this into the theme, Visibility/ Invisibility: "What you see isn't always what you think you see. When we read aloud, we interject the right thing into what we've written." Another pattern she shows him is that he drops *s*'s, so she teaches him agreement of subject and verb. Of course, one-on-one mini-lessons such as this take up time, and it is next to impossible to deal with every student in such detail each time.

Slater sees mechanics and grammar as important elements of written and spoken English, but they are not the overwhelming focus of the classroom. Instead, Slater focuses on encouraging her students to think and take risks with language, to try to use new words. Grammar and the conventions of English are important and are attended to, but not as an isolated big lesson. Students themselves learn to begin solving their own language problems. Slater makes the explicit comparison between "osmosis" and learning language, saying that the brain is soaking up language all of the time (12/10/97). She says to the class, "One of the best ways of getting the structure of the English language into your head is reading." She goes on to tell the class that when they are reading, they are picking up punctuation, grammar, irregular verbs, and spelling. High interest literature has great potential for engaging readers. A rich diet of reading will aid students in vocabulary development, spelling, grammar, and usage (Elley, 1997).

Reading

The broader topic of "reading" is used here instead of "literature," because students spend so much time reading other students' work. Other students' writing itself further prods student thinking, provides wonderful writing models, and generates further conversations. Multilayering at work again.

We know that literature has an important role in the development of a sharp, literate mind

(Langer, 1992), Slater's students are required to read a great deal. First, they must read a short story or chapter of a novel for their weekly literature letters. Second, Slater chooses high-interest pieces of literature for study in each topic. Students actually do read; they read constantly and clearly enjoy the literature available.

The cupboards in Slater's small classroom are filled with high-interest short stories, novels by famous authors, and magazines — in both English and other languages. She collects and buys these on her own time. "I never use textbooks, I use real books." (6/26/97) While Slater holds all students in her class to the same general curriculum, she tries to invite novice English learners in by offering multiple versions of the same story: the original version, a simplified version, a comic book version, or an audiocassette version. With so many versions of a story to choose from, all students can read the story and get at the plot and basic ideas, discuss questions together, and collaborate in working through their activity guide. Too often, novice English learners are excluded from reading until they have mastered English language skills. Here they are expected to read and make meaning of literature.

Slater recognizes that choice plays a powerful role in learning, and so students are able to choose their own stories for their literature letters. Choices can also be made when groups work through topics for two or three weeks. For example, for the topic "Patterns and Images" students could choose to read James Thurber's "The Unicorn in the Garden," Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken," Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky," Edwin Robinson's "Richard Cory," an adapted version of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, a biography and movie of *The Elephant Man*, or focus on the art of M.C. Escher. (The range and quality of this list are typical of the kind of selections Slater offers for all topics.) Slater was particularly impressed with the way students developed empathy with the characters in the literature for this topic. In the space of three weeks, students were able to read several of the above selections. Some groups read more than others. Each group chose what interested them.

Slater's book cupboards also contain literature of many different cultures to reflect the backgrounds of her students. She admits though that she looks for a lot of American authors for the kind of literature that will teach students the cultural perspectives of Americans. She is keen to expand their point of view. Slater explicitly tells students that reading helps them develop their English language skills and helps them learn about other people.

Slater encourages students to make use of the LaGuardia Community College library for stories to read, research information, and newspapers. Slater also encourages the students to use the Donnell Library in New York City, which has a large collection of young adult books and books in other languages, lots of items on tape, and a large multimedia center that lends out tapes, records, and videos. She has even taken groups of students there.

While Slater expects students to read at home in order to allow time for discussion in class, it was clear that students had developed their own strategies for getting into and through the reading of literature, all making use of their groups during class time. Maria and Manuel worked as a pair reading *Gulliver's Travels* aloud, discussing vocabulary and meanings when they arose. Nina, a novice, relied on Natalie's line-by-line Spanish translation of *Gulliver's Travels*. The social context of this class allows for students to find their own way into reading. Slater does not stand in front of the class and read the story or poem aloud to students. Each group must read themselves.

A lively literary community develops in Slater's classroom. The environment invites discussion, speculation, drawing on personal experiences, and reading. Students have real conversations on aspects of the literature that intrigue them. Clearly, these students enjoy reading.

Thinking

Slater constantly encourages her students to think more deeply about their reading, their writing, their discussions. She scaffolds and supports students' thinking in group discussion, the activity guides, topic essays, and grade conferences. The 3 R's ever present in her classroom seem to be – rethink, redo, reflect. Through the mastery questions in the activity guides students are pushed to gain the philosophical and conceptual ideas in literature. These same ideas are revisited again and again in the group and later in connecting threads across the disciplines. Even later, when preparing graduation portfolios in their senior year, students rework selected writings from their earlier years. Both Slater and the principal mentioned that this year the senior students said how much they enjoyed revisiting work from their earlier years at the school.

Slater is aware of students in their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) and is ready to push them into more difficult territory. She stretches them in their language development, in making interdisciplinary connections, and in thinking about their own learning.

Assessment

It is essential to bear in mind that Slater's teaching team is an interdisciplinary team in deed as well as name. The students study the same themes simultaneously in all their subjects in order to deepen links among the disciplines and learn more in-depth. In addition, much of their assessment is based on essays and projects designed to combine the content areas through the topics and subtopics. The assessment procedures described below are a team wide effort.

Semester Portfolios and Assessments. The Motion team is unique at International in that it requires two portfolios each semester: a mid-cycle portfolio (see Appendix C) and a final portfolio (see Appendix D). The mid-cycle portfolio is designed to prepare students for their final portfolios at the end of the semester. Each portfolio is a collection of selected work done thus far in the semester, and it is a means for students to demonstrate their mastery of the material covered and as a way in which to communicate their progress to their parents. It includes:

1) A summary document that catalogues their attendance, lateness, and grades, and includes assessment by themselves, their peers, and a faculty member. Students are required to include reaction sheets from two peers and one instructor.

2) A mastery essay (pulling together all three topics studied in the first half of the semester: light, macroscopic/microscopic, and images).

3) A personal statement in which students are asked to comment upon their cognitive growth, personal growth, and language growth.

4) One of the three topic projects they have done, computerized and on a disk.

5) A letter to their parents in their native language and English, in which students are asked to describe what they are learning, their portfolio, their progress, and their goals. (Parents are expected to write a response to the portfolio, and their children must translate the response into English.)

Grade conferences are attended by the student and two teachers from the team. It is a forum for discussion on the students' learning and is used to set goals for the rest of the semester.

Despite the Herculean task of reviewing portfolios twice a semester, the team is convinced that the mid-cycle portfolio is an important way for students to prepare for final portfolios.

The final portfolio is on a much larger scale. At a minimum it includes:

1) A cover sheet listing completed work and grades
2) Mid-cycle letters to and from the family
3) All final topic essays (revised and typed)
4) Mastery essay
5) Personal statement

Students choose two teachers and two peers to review their portfolio and comment. The grade conference includes these individuals as well as two or three more peers. They sit around a table discussing portfolios one by one. Again, metacognition plays an important part in the literacy development of these students. The teaching team is able to listen to students say what was difficult and therefore is able to reconsider ways to restructure the next semester. This process also helps the team keep close tabs on students and understand them more intimately. The grade conference conversation often begins with a teacher saying, "Tell us something you did this semester that you are proud of." (1/22/98). Students respond and then peers give feedback on their reading of the portfolio of work. Finally, the students negotiate their grades with teachers and peers.

PART 4: DISCUSSION

Three Significant Elements of Slater's English Classroom

Students in Slater's classroom live in a rich language environment that provides a stark contrast to the desert of language learning in the traditional ESL classroom, where students are given little room to talk, write, speak, or read at length. Three important elements stand out in Slater's classroom: how the school and its teachers see their ESL learners; how Slater defines her role as teacher; and how students are prepared academically to succeed.

First, students are treated as intelligent and capable learners and are given a rigorous

curriculum. A "can do" attitude permeates this exemplary classroom of ESL learners. They are immersed in language, getting the whole feel and taste of language on a daily basis. Most important, students are given dignity – they are treated as intelligent individuals, and their native language is welcomed and validated. They feel cared for in this community, which counters feelings of isolation and being different.

Second, Slater slowly, almost invisibly, carefully builds a social context that both embraces the novice and pushes the more experienced language learner to more difficult territory. She has a strong philosophical understanding of learning, and so can help in nurturing language learning for her students. She has a very firm foundation in understanding what the writing process, talking to learn, negotiating the curriculum, and learning across the curriculum involve. She knows what she's doing but sees herself as a learner too, being flexible and open to change, knowing that no two classrooms will ever be the same. Slater exudes a "warm, colloquial flexibility" (Barnes, 1971). She clearly loves her students, and treats them with warmth and respect.

Third, it is amazing to see how these ESL students rise from their initial inexperience with the English language to developing an academic voice. Students earn their *academic clothing* throughout their time at International. They learn particular ways of talk appropriate to particular situations, whether in group work or portfolio presentations. Students explain their thinking in their own words. Interactive discourse promotes not only the learning of language but also the thoughtful learning of content. Students learn how to write and read many different genres, and they make incredible progress in their writing and reading abilities. Most important, they learn how to think about literature and nonfiction, to connect ideas across the disciplines, and to reflect on their own learning. They have opportunities to not only read and hear other students' writing and ideas, but learn ways of constructively giving input, challenging, and helping other students move ahead. They learn the sanctioned American way of sounding confident, a skill that will help both inside and outside of school. Their focus in classroom work is on ideas and meaning, not piecemeal skill. As a result, they receive good preparation for future academic and nonacademic success.

Links Between Slater's Professional Life and Her Classroom Practice

In what ways might Slater's professional life influence the ways she teaches English – what approaches have helped her students achieve such great gains in their language abilities? Three ways in particular stand out: the knowledge she has gained about learning theory; the collaborative environment of International; her and the school's focus on reflection.

First, Slater's desire to understand more about how people learn led her to several pivotal professional experiences. She cites in particular the transforming effect her year-long participation in The New York City Writing Project had on her approach to teaching and on understanding the importance of the writing process. Her post graduate study (two masters degrees and a doctorate) helped feed her hunger for theory and her commitment to put what she was learning into practice. What she learned from these experiences has shaped what and how she teaches English.

Second, the focus on collaborative learning is one of the remarkable aspects of Slater's, indeed of all of International's, classes. What must be noted is that Slater herself works in the same kind of heterogeneous, collaborative small groups that she expects her students to work in. At the team level, teachers collaboratively decide on curriculum, goals, and schedules. They also work together to find ways to assist students in resolving academic or personal problems, meeting collectively with the student and/or parent. Within the school, teachers in other collaborative groups handle schoolwide issues – staff development, curriculum, personnel, and special reform projects such as developing rubrics. Still wider afield, the school's professional links with LaGuardia Community College and the Partnership Schools allow for and demand further collaboration. As teachers work on these collaborative teams, they are living examples of how groups can work together and succeed. Teachers, thus, are in an outstanding position to support and scaffold students' endeavors to create collaborative teams that further individual learning and progress.

Third, Slater is constantly reflecting on her teaching, just as she requires students to constantly reflect on their learning. As part of her professional community at International, Slater prepares portfolios, participates in peer evaluation presentations, and contributes ideas to the yearly school evaluation and goal-setting process. Slater and her colleagues at International feel

that reflection is an integral part of learning, and so they make sure that teachers have built-in opportunities to reflect on their work as individuals, as teams, and as a school and that students have built-in opportunities to reflect on their work as individuals and as a group. Because Slater experiences this kind of reflection process, she knows why it is important for her students to experience it and how to best provide this kind of experience for them. The entire school is a community of learners who are prepared to take risks and try new things, then reflect on and evaluate the outcomes collectively.

Clearly, International is a place designed to bring out excellence in both teachers and students. It is a living, thriving example that the demands and resources and supports and expectations given to teachers do directly affect the demands and resources and support and expectations that teachers give to students. Marsha S. Slater, a founding member of International High School, contributes to and benefits from the interactive, reflective, collaborative professional environment of International. Slater's students, too, benefit greatly from the environment of International as well as from the remarkable dedication and wisdom of their teacher, Marsha S. Slater.

REFERENCES

Arreaga-Mayer, C., & Perdomo-Rivera, C. (1996). Ecobehavioral analysis of instruction of at-risk language-minority students. *The Elementary School Journal, 96,* 245-258.

Bakhtin, M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination.* (C. Emerson & M. Helquist, Trans.). Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Elley, W.B. (1997). *In praise of incidental learning: Lessons from some empirical findings on language acquisition.* Albany, NY: National Research Center on English Learning and Achievement. University at Albany, SUNY.

Langer, J. (1992). *Critical Thinking and English Language Arts Instruction.* Albany, NY: National Research Center on Literature Teaching and Learning. University at Albany, SUNY.

Langer, J. (1995). *Envisioning Literature Literacy Understanding and Literature Instruction.* New York; Teachers College Press.

New York City Board of Education, Alternative Superintendency. (1996-1997). *Annual School Report.* New York: Division of Assessment and Accountability.

Nystrand, M., Gamoran, A., & Carbonaro, W. (1998). *Towards an ecology of learning: The case of classroom discourse and its effects on writing in high school English and Social Studies.* Albany, NY: National Research Center on English Learning and Achievement. University at Albany, SUNY.

Rogoff, B. (1994). Developing Understanding of the Idea of Community of Learners. *Mind, Culture and Activity, 1,* 209-229.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

APPENDIX A: THE METACOGNITIVE JOURNAL: A PLACE TO REFLECT

by Dr. Marsha S. Slater

Writing is a very powerful way of thinking. It is a way to make sense out of your experiences. It is not just a way to record thinking or experiences. Your journal can be much more then a summary of what you did this cycle. It can help you learn. When you write in your journal, for example, it is very likely that you will discover that there are things that you don't understand. This can be very valuable.

Your journal is about your mental activity in your classes, not your private life outside of school. Use your journal to think on paper about what you are learning and how you are learning it. In your journal you may write about your learning in any of your Motion classes.

You are writing the journal for yourself and your teachers. It will help you discover and record what you are learning. It will help your teachers get a better idea of who you are and how you think. If you have questions about Motion, write them in your journal so your teachers can help you. Each week you will write every day. Your journal will be collected once a week, read, and responded to.

You should write about yourself as a learner. To stimulate your thoughts and give you ideas, here are some questions and suggestions for entries:

1. How do you learn best?
2. What questions do you have?
3. How did you solve a problem?
4. What confuses you?
5. What have you figured out and how?
6. What are you discovering about yourself as a member of a group?
7. What are you discovering about group work?
8. What surprises you?
9. What knowledge are you gaining? How do you know? Give specific evidence of learning.
10. What skills are you learning? How do you know? Give specific evidence of learning.
11. What progress are you making (in English or math or your native language, knowledge, skills, personal and social skills)?
12. What new connections and relationships do you see in the work you are doing?
13. What did you learn from a class activity, discussion, or group work?
14. What questions do you have about the work you are doing or not able to do in class?
15. Describe any discoveries you make about the English language, your native language, the symbolic language of mathematics, art, your language skills, . . . or yourself
16. Describe the process you went through to understand something.
17. What patterns or relationships have you discovered in your work?
18. How do you feel about your work, the classes, or your activities?
19. What problems did your group or the class have? What are some ideas for solving these problems?
20. How do you know you have learned something?

Real learning, or understanding of something, has occurred when:

a. you can state it in your own words
b. you can give examples of it
c. you can recognize it in various guises and circumstances (different appearances, likenesses, uses, and contexts)
d. you can make use of it in various ways (apply it)
e. you can see connections between it and other facts or ideas
f. you can foresee some of its consequences (see where it may lead, what effects it could have)
g. you can state its opposite or converse

Try to focus your journal entries on:

- your language learning (reading, writing, speaking, and listening in English and your native language as well as the symbolic language of mathematics)
- your cognitive (thinking) abilities and the specific information or knowledge you are learning
- your personal skills like group work, responsibility, and self-management

Within these categories, you may write on any topic or issue you choose.

APPENDIX B: ACTIVITY GUIDE

"To Build a Fire" by Jack London.

Name_____

Group Members:_____

_____

_____

Credit earned: _____

"The more you move the longer you live." Discuss with your group and decide what you think this sentence means about people physically and mentally. Each person should write the answers in his or her own words.

Physically

Mentally

Before you begin to read, here is some vocabulary you will need to know. Discuss the words and write down their meanings. Use a dictionary only if no one in the group knows the meanings.

Yukon

spat--past of spit

frostbite

numb

thaw out

chuckled

whiplashes

moccasins

BEFORE YOU READ THE STORY, READ ALL THE DIRECTIONS BELOW:

Imagine you are in one of the coldest places in the world and are going on a trip. There are no cars, planes or trains. How will you get from one place to another?

What dangers are there?

What would you need to survive?

Now you are ready to read. As you read if you have a problem ask for help. You may need to read this more then once. Everyone will have to take the story home to reread or finish so you can do the following work together in class. Look at how many pages there are. When will everyone finish this story? Decide together and write it below:
We will finish the story by_____

When you finish reading the whole story, do the following:
Write down all the questions you have about the story or any parts that confuse you. Use the space below to write your questions.

Discuss your questions with your group and write the answers. Use this space.

Now answer these questions:
What happens in the story? Write a **short** plot summary of 5-6 sentences that includes the beginning, the middle, and the end.

How do you feel about the end? Would you change it? How?

The **conflict** of a story is a struggle between an important character and another person or thing or force. One side wins. What is the conflict in this story?

Who wins it?

Is this inevitable? (unavoidable) Why or why not?

By having the conflict end this way, what do you think Jack London is saying about life? That is, what is the **theme** of this story?

We can see how physical motion is important in this story. Mentally the character moves also. How does the journey change his view of life? If you can, use lines from the story to support your ideas.

How does this change affect the way you feel about him?

Discuss as a group and write a paragraph answering the following question:
What is the relationship between movement and change? In your paragraph, relate this to any work on movement and change you did in physics/math or Project Adventure. Each person should write the paragraph in his or her own words.

Mastery Questions (If you need more space, attach additional sheets of paper.)

1. Why do you think the man ignores the danger and goes on his journey anyway? What do you think this says about people? Do you agree or disagree? Explain your answer. Give reasons. Try to find reasons that you can back up with lines from the story.

2. In the story, the author, Jack London shows us the dog's thoughts as well as the man's thoughts. How is the way the man thinks different from the way the dog thinks? Why do you think this is so? What do you think London is showing us about the difference between people and animals? What evidence from the story makes you think this? Do you agree or disagree? Explain your answer. Give reasons.

3. In the end of the story, the man keeps moving, hoping it will help, even though he is pretty sure it will not. Why do you think he continues to move anyway? That is, what is it about moving that is important to human beings? What evidence do you have from the story or your personal experience that this is so? That is, why do you think this?

4. Think about the saying you already discussed before reading the story: "The more you move the longer you live." Do you see any more meanings in it now, after you have read the story? What new meanings do you see about people physically and mentally? What are your reasons?

APPENDIX C: MID-SEMESTER PORTFOLIO

Portfolio: Motion Mid-Semester Fall 1997
Name _____ Motion strand:_____
Please indicate your attendance in each class and the activities which you have completed.

Humanities: Absences: _____ Latenesses: _____
- Body Language:_____
- Falling Idioms: _____
- Leonardo DaVinci: _____
- Inventions: _____
- Journey to America: _____
- Theme of Motion: _____
- Walking on Air: _____
- The Last Leaf:_____
- Southbound on the Freeway: _____
- Daedalus and Icarus: _____
- Biography: _____
- The Flying Fool: _____
- Number of short story letters completed: _____
- Humanities quality points: _____

Math/Science/Technology: Absences: _____ Latenesses: _____
- Activity 1: _____
- Reaction Time: _____
- Pendulum: _____
- Free Fall: _____
- Balance Beam: _____
- Density: _____
- Math/Science/Technology quality points: _____

Number of daily journals completed: _____
Essay on Falling and Gravity: _____
Essay on Flying/Floating/Sailing: _____
Essay quality points: _____
Average absences and Latenesses: _____ Attendance Grade: _____
Total Quality Points: _____ Mid-semester Quality Points grade:_____

Part 1: Mastery Statement

Your first portfolio for Motion should include the following.

- Essay on Falling and Gravity (typed on Macintosh)
- Essay on Flying/Floating/Sailing (typed on Macintosh)
- Integration essay (connection of classes)

What did you learn about MOTION from all the work you did on the two topics you studied ("Falling and Gravity" and "Flying/Floating/Sailing")?
Use specific examples from classwork, journals, outside research, the literature you read for your literature letters, and art projects. Do not repeat what you learned about the individual topics. Think about Motion in general.

Do not forget Motion is physical, emotional, and intellectual.

Take **one science log** (from an activity) AND **one humanities essay** (from an activity). Read the comments given by the teachers. Now, revise your log AND your essay so that they are both more complete. Include BOTH copies (the original with teacher's comments and the revised version) of your log AND your essay in this portfolio.

Part 2: Personal Statement
The personal statement is a way for you to think about what you have learned and how you learned. There should be a section (a few paragraphs to a few pages) on each of the following:

- **Language Growth**
- **Cognitive Growth**
- **Personal Growth**

In each area, linguistic, cognitive, and personal growth, you should describe:

- What have you achieved?
- What helped you to learn?
- What problems did you have? Which have you solved? How did you solve them? Which problems remain?
- What goals do you have now for this area?

Be specific and give examples based on your experiences in MOTION.

APPENDIX D: FINAL PORTFOLIO

Motion Winter 1998

Please write your name on top of each page of your mastery and personal statements. Use as many pages as you need. Use 12 point type and double space. Do not print in bold face. Use spell check. **Be sure** to use Macintosh 5.1 Word for your mastery statement and be sure to save your work on your disk. If you create your work on a computer other than Macintosh, be sure to have your work translated to Macintosh 5.1 Word.

Your final portfolio for Motion should include the following two parts:

Part 1: Mastery Statement

All topic essays (in Macintosh format). These include: Falling and Gravity, Flying/Floating/Sailing, Motions of the Planets, Forces, and Collisions.

Integration essay (connection of classes)

What did you learn about Motion from all the work you did on the five topics you studied (Falling and Gravity, Falling/Floating/Sailing, Motions of the Planets, Forces, and Collisions)?

Think and write about Motion in general and in depth. In your topic essays you have already written the specific facts you learned about Motion. In this integration essay, try to go deeper. Think about Motion as a large idea, not just as individual facts or activities. That is, how has your study of Motion helped you to understand the world in new ways? For example, what do you understand about how people behave or think (in terms of intellectual, physical, and emotional Motion) that you didn't understand before? What do you understand now about how the world and/or universe works physically that you didn't understand before? What do you understand about yourself now (in terms of intellectual, physical, and emotional Motion) that you didn't understand before?

It may help you to answer these questions: What do I now understand about Motion as an idea that I did not understand before this semester? What do I now know about the concept or theme of Motion that I didn't know before this semester?

In your integration essay, go as deeply as you can into large ideas, abstract thoughts, and conceptual understandings of the theme of the course, Motion.

In your integration essay, use specific examples from classwork, journals, outside research, the literature you read for your literature letters, and art projects to explain your ideas. Do not repeat what you learned about the individual topics. Instead, use what you learned about individual topics to demonstrate your new conceptual understanding of Motion.

<u>Do not forget Motion is physical, emotional, and intellectual.</u> <u>Also, remember that Motion is change over time.</u>

Part 2: Personal Statement

Be sure to be specific and give examples based on your experiences in Motion, not outside experiences.

The personal statement is a way for you to explain what you have learned and how you learned. There should be a section (a few paragraphs to a few pages) on each of the following:

- **Language (Linguistic) Growth**
- **Cognitive (Academic, Intellectual) Growth**
- **Personal Growth**

To help you write your personal statement, use the criteria for growth for **each area**, language, cognitive, and personal growth. Be sure to include each area in your personal statement.

Language Growth includes:

- your progress in the ability to understand, speak, read, and write in English
- your progress in the use of native language
- your progress in the use of the language of mathematics

Cognitive Growth includes:

- your increased understanding of the work
- your increased ability to think and solve problems
- your increased ability to explain the work to others
- how clearly and completely you explained in the mastery statement

Personal Growth includes:

- your increased responsibility and completion of work
- how much better you support others and work in a group
- your effort, how much harder you tried
- how clearly and completely you explained in the personal statement
- your improved attendance grade

In each area, linguistic, cognitive, and personal growth, use each one of the criteria listed for that area. Talk about each individual criterion, one by one. For each one, you should describe:

1. **What you have achieved**
2. **What helped you to learn**
3. **What problems you had and which problems you have solved. How did you solve them? Which problems remain?**
4. **What goals do you have now for this area for the rest of the year?**

So, for example, for linguistic growth, be sure to write what you have achieved in your ability to understand, read, write, and speak in English. Then explain **what you have achieved** in your ability to use your native language. Then, explain **what you have achieved** in your use of the language of mathematics.

Then, explain **what helped you to learn** to understand, speak, read, and write in English. Then, explain **what helped you to learn** to use your native language better. Then, explain **what helped you to learn** to use the language of mathematics better. Next, write about **what problems you had and which problems you have solved** in understanding, reading, writing and speaking in English. Then, write about

what problems you had and which problems you have solved in the use of your native language. Next, write about **what problems you had and which problems you have solved** in using the language of mathematics.

How did you solve your problems in understanding, speaking, reading and writing in English? **How did you solve** your problems in using your native language? **How did you solve** your problems in using the language of mathematics?

Which problems remain in the ability to understand, read, write, and speak in English? **Which problems remain** in your ability to use your native language? **Which problems remain** in your use of the language of mathematics?

What goals do you have now for your ability to understand, speak, read, and write in English? What goals do you have now in your ability to use your native language? What goals do you have now in your use of the language of mathematics?

RELATED REPORTS AND CASE STUDIES FROM THE EXCELLENCE IN ENGLISH RESEARCH PROJECT

12002 *Excellence in English in Middle and High School: How Teachers' Professional Lives Support Student Achievement.* Judith A. Langer.

The following site-specific case studies profile teachers, teams of teachers, and central office administrators. These and others will be available beginning in spring 1999.

12004 *Beating the Odds Over Time: One District's Perspective.* Sallie Snyder.

12005 *A Middle School Teacher Never Stops Learning: The Case of Cathy Starr.* Eija Rougle.

12006 *Vocational School English Teacher Engages Students in Higher Level Reading and Writing: The Case of Janas Masztal.* Steven Ostrowski.

12008 *Collegial Support and Networks Invigorate Teaching: The Case of Marsha S. Slater.* Ester Helmar-Salasoo with Sally Kahr.

12009 *Forging Connections to Advance Literacy in the Middle School: The Case of Rita Gold.* Steven Ostrowski.

12010 *Interdisciplinary Cluster as Professional Network: Three Middle School Teachers in a Two-Way Bilingual Program.* Gladys Cruz.

For an up-to-date listing and current availability, visit the CELA website: http://cela.albany.edu or call 518-442-5026.

Please help us assess the quality of our research report series by completing and returning the questionnaire below:

NAME OF REPORT: **COLLEGIAL SUPPORT AND NETWORKS INVIGORATE TEACHING: THE CASE OF MARSHA S. SLATER**

1. Your position:

____ elementary school teacher	___ state ed. agency staff	___ policy maker
____ middle school teacher	___ professional developer	___ researcher
____ high school teacher	___ school administrator	___ education writer
____ college teacher/professor	___ district administrator	other___ _____

2. Clarity — Very well ... Not at all

1. The concepts in this report were clearly expressed.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
2. This report was well organized.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

3. Utility

1. Reading this report gave me new information or insight into teaching or learning.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
2. This report addresses a current and important problem in education,	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
. . . and offers a solution to the problem.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
. . . and/or helps the reader understand the problem from a different perspective.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
3. I found the ideas and solutions offered in this report to be feasible given current realities of policy and practice.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

4. Scholarship

1. The conclusions drawn in the report are						
. . . adequately supported by the research presented.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
. . . fully grounded in theory.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

5. Any other comments or suggestions regarding this report or additional research needs in the area of English and language arts teaching and learning are greatly appreciated.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please return this form to:

Janet Angelis, Associate Director
Center on English Learning & Achievement
University at Albany, State University of New York
1400 Washington Ave., ED, B-9
Albany, NY 12222 (518) 442-5023
jangelis@cnsvax.albany.edu